



Weekly Iraq .Xplored report

18 August 2018

Prepared by Risk Analysis Team, Iraq

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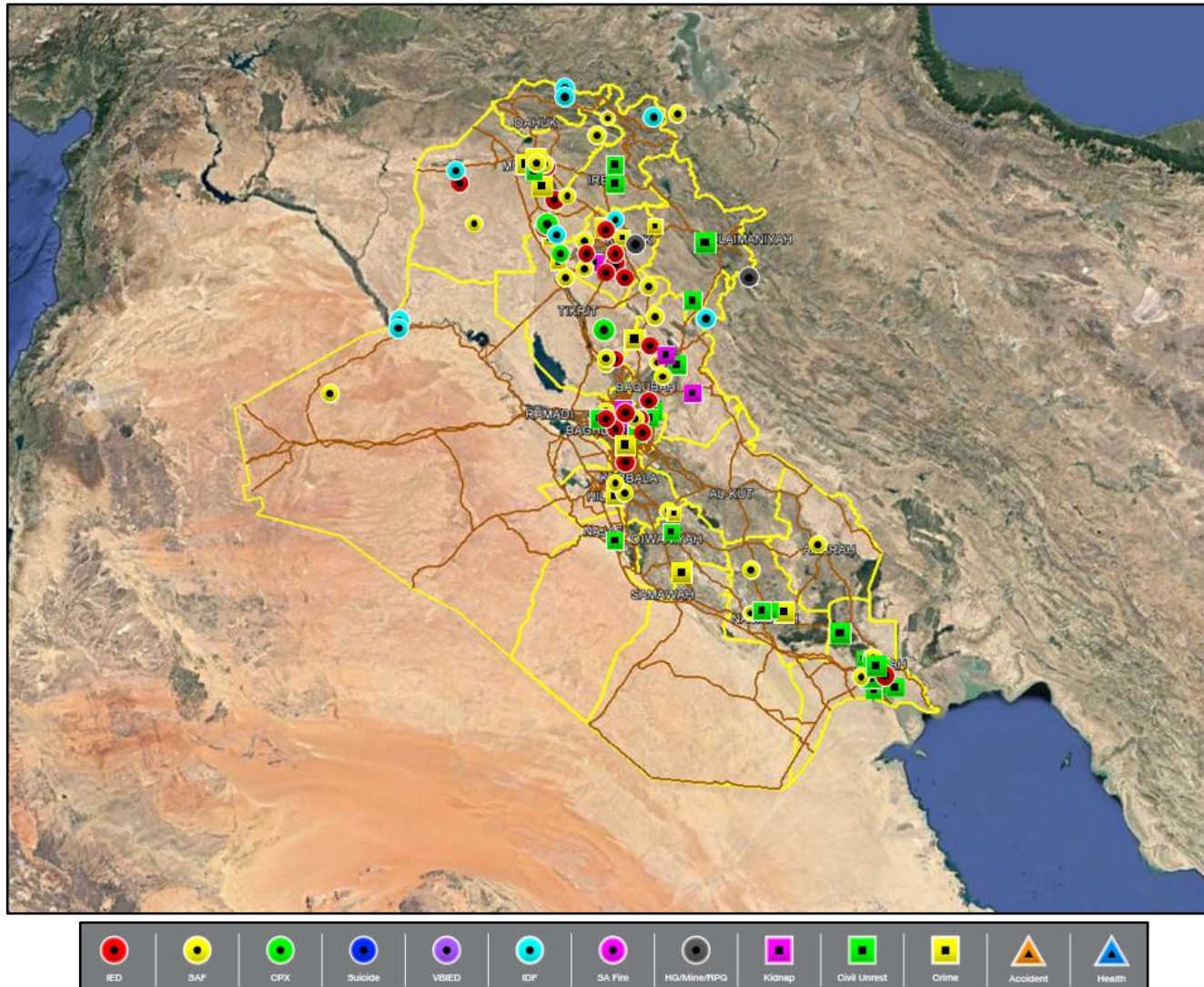
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ACTIVITY MAP



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OUTLOOK**Short term outlook**

- Protest activity remains the central theme of reporting from southern Iraq, with demonstrations in relation to basic service provision and employment in their second month. Extra care is advised when travelling to locations affected by large-scale demonstrations in August. The Iraqi Security Forces remain on alert as the protests continue.
- Demonstrations can be expected to continue in the next few weeks as demand for both commodities increases during the hot summer months. Demands for employment opportunities were also emphasized. Such events can be expected to continue, with the likelihood of them becoming more violent dependent on the security forces' initial reactions.
- The fall-out of the May 12 parliamentary elections remains the focus of political reporting. The manual recount of votes is now complete, with the government formation process to start officially after the results are confirmed by the Federal Supreme Court which is expected in late August. Political negotiations over the government composition are likely to be complicated by the current protest activity in southern Iraq, with the PM Haider al-Abadi's security leadership and popularity tested by violent demonstrations.
- Controversial results of the parliamentary elections and the ongoing disputes resulting from the Kurdish independence referendum mean that the general threat from political instability in northern Iraq could manifest itself to varying degrees of unrest and violence at the local level. On July 01, a suicide VBIED targeted a warehouse housing ballot boxes in Kirkuk; one security element was killed and 20 others were injured. On July 18, multiple explosive devices detonated in the city centre reportedly injuring at least a dozen civilians. Increased security is expected to be seen in Erbil, following the attack on the Governor's Office on July 23.

Medium to long term outlook

- A protracted period of coalition building is expected follow the elections. The official government formation process will be initiated once the Federal Court confirms the parliamentary election results. A period of transition will follow in which bureaucracy will increase as incumbents and policy changes.
- The election results and government composition will have a significant impact on the security environment in northern Iraq. In the absence of a concerted effort to engage the disenfranchised Sunni population of the country, these areas will remain at risk of sectarian violence from radical Sunni elements, especially in Nineveh, Salah al-Din and western Kirkuk.
- Islamic State activity will continue to dominate security reporting with focus on the potential resurgence of an insurgent campaign in northern and western Iraq. Despite ongoing ISF efforts to clear remaining IS pockets, the group retains a degree of freedom of movement in the desert regions of Anbar, near the Syrian border, and along the Hamrin Mountains.
- Low-level incidents related to criminality, personal disputes and tribal tensions are likely to continue in Basra and the southern region. Long-term tensions are also expected to be driven by the return of militia factions expecting material and social rewards for their contribution in the campaign against IS.

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

Supreme Court to Ratify Recount

The Iraqi Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) announced on August 16 that it had delivered final results of the recent disputed national election to the Federal Supreme Court for ratification. The election, held on May 12, was marred by widespread allegations of fraud. With popular calls for a recount, the Iraqi parliament passed a resolution, approved by the court to manually recount votes cast in polling centres about which complaints had been lodged and to annul portions of the national balloting. After the recount was completed last week, the commission said on August 09, that there was no significant change from results it had initially announced.

20,000 – 30,000 IS Fighters Remain in Iraq and Syria

The United Nations released a report on August 14 estimating that there are between 20,000 - 30,000 Da'esh fighters remain in Iraq and Syria despite the extremist group's defeat and a halt in the flow of foreigners joining its ranks. The report by UN sanctions monitors estimate that the total Da'esh membership in Iraq and Syria was "between 20,000 and 30,000 individuals, roughly equally distributed between the two countries." "Among these is still a significant component of the many thousands of active foreign terrorist fighters," said the report.

Iraqi Kurdish minister warns of changing IS threat

Acting Peshmerga Minister of Iraq's Kurdistan Region Kareem Sinjari has said that the Peshmerga forces should be prepared as Islamic State is reorganizing in "a new form". Sinjari said "a robust plan" has been put in place to enhance the Peshmerga's capacity and that support is needed from all sides and the coalition countries.

THREAT MATRIX

Region	Political	Terrorism	Militancy	Crime	K&R
KRG*	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Low	Low
North**	Moderate	High-Extreme	High	High	High
Baghdad	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Anbar	Moderate	High	High	High	High
South***	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

Threat Scale	Minimal	Low	Moderate	High	Extreme
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* **KRG** – Dohuk, Erbil & Sulaymaniyah

** **North** – Nineveh, Salah ad-Din & Diyala

*** **South** – Babil, Wasit, Karbala, Najaf, Diwaniyah, Dhi Qar, Muthanna, Maysan & Basra

OVERVIEW

Political

Supreme Court to Ratify Recount

The Iraqi Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) announced on August 16 that it had delivered final results of the recent disputed national election to the Federal Supreme Court for ratification. The election, held on May 12, was marred by widespread allegations of fraud. With popular calls for a recount, the Iraqi parliament passed a resolution, approved by the court to manually recount votes cast in polling centres about which complaints had been lodged and to annul portions of the national balloting. After the recount was completed last week, the commission said on August 09, that there was no significant change from results it had initially announced. "The final results of the elections were sent to the Federal Supreme Court for the purpose of ratification," IHEC Spokesperson Judge Laiyth Jabir Hamza said in a statement, adding that this was done after the Iraqi Higher Judicial Council had considered all appeals against the outcome of the process. In late June, the Supreme Court also ratified the part of the parliament's decision to freeze the work of IHEC, assigning nine judges to instead run the recount. "And thus the task entrusted to the Iraqi Higher Judicial Council and IHEC [headed by the nine judges] has been completed," Hamza added. IHEC, which oversees elections in Iraq, began conducting the manual recount on July 03, starting in Kirkuk and concluding nearly a month later on 06 August. The commission, according to Hamza, "decided to cancel the recount process for the Rusafah district after the ballot boxes, its accessories, and the auditing equipment was damaged in a fire." Within 15 days of the Supreme Court's ratification of final election results, the newly-seated parliament members are charged with electing a new speaker and two deputies in their first session.

After a new speaker is in place, lawmakers have 30 days to elect, by a two-thirds majority, Iraq's new president, who is then given 15 days to nominate the prime minister from the largest bloc in parliament. The prime minister, in turn, will have another 30 days to form his cabinet, with ministers then referred back to parliament for individual approval. If the effort is unsuccessful, the president has yet another 15 days to nominate another prime minister to repeat the process of forming a cabinet.

Allawi's National Alliance rejects new Sunni bloc

The National Alliance, which is headed by Ayad Allawi, released a statement on the evening of August 16, commenting on the newly-formed coalition the "National Axis". In the statement, the National Alliance said that it rejected joining the bloc as it did not want to be part of a sectarian or ideological bloc. The National Axis, which was formed on August 15, includes prominent Sunni political figures such as Khamis al-Khanjar, Osama al-Nujaifi, and Jamal al-Karbouli. While it remains to be seen if the National Alliance actively decided not to join, it appears that cracks are already emerging within the Coalition. On August 16, reports emerged that highlighted how the major figures within the new Coalition had still not agreed upon who would become the candidate for parliamentary speaker, which is traditionally held by a Sunni. Meanwhile, former Iraqi Prime Minister and head of the State of Law Coalition, Nouri al-Maliki, met with the Osama al-Nujaifi and other Sunni leaders at his office in Baghdad on August 16. According to a readout of the meeting, the discussion focused on the ongoing negotiations to form a new government. Given the formation of the National Axis (which despite its recent formation still remains a fragile entity), the newly-formed Sunni bloc will have a significant bearing on the make-up of the next government, given the collective political strength these figures hold. Recent discussions between other political factions suggest that Maliki is looking to enter into an alliance with the Nasr Coalition, Fatah Coalition, and the two largest Kurdish parties, the KDP and the PUK. The addition of a large Sunni bloc would all but signal the marginalisation of Sairoun Alliance headed by Muqtada al-Sadr.

Iraqi Kurdish parties respond to results of election recount

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has not been observed to respond to the results of the manual recount of the results of the Iraqi parliamentary elections, which were announced on August 09. However, there have been some reactions from senior figures in the two ruling parties, both of whom have been accused of

vote-rigging, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The results, which saw little change to the initial results announced in May, have also been condemned by Kurdish opposition parties. The next step in the process is for the Iraqi Supreme Federal Court to approve the results within 15 days, paving the way for the first session of parliament and formation of the government.

There has been little coverage of the results by outlets affiliated with the ruling KDP. For the most part outlets simply reported the development as news and said that KDP votes were not altered by the process. A KDP MP at the Iraqi parliament, Ashwaq Jaff, spoke to kdp.info on August 11 about the results. She said that all parties should respect the results once they are approved by the federal court, in spite of parties' concerns about missing "a lot of KDP votes and the dismissing of votes by displaced persons". The report went on to say that "a lot of KDP votes in Sulaymaniyah are missing and lots of KDP votes from Sinjar and Mosul displaced persons were not accounted for." Speaking in an interview with the Kurdish Service of Voice of America broadcast on August 13, KDP Foreign Relations head KDP Hoshyar Siwaily said the PUK and KDP have "a joint agenda" to head to Baghdad after the federal court approves the results.

Meanwhile, PUK spokesman Saadi Pira responded to the results and allegations that his party was involved in widespread fraud in Sulaymaniyah and Kirkuk provinces at a press conference on August 11, according to PUK outlet PUK-media. He said: "After the federal court announces its stance on the results, the PUK will provide a clarification through a statement, and the [PUK party] headquarters have a right to file complaints against those parties who disgraced our voters and candidates." He called on discontented parties to "file lawsuits, not bully the PUK".

Both PUK and KDP officials have also commented on the results in Kirkuk in reports by KDP-affiliated Rudaw website. An official at the PUK office in Kirkuk, Ali Qallayee, told the website that the manual recount process was "successful" and the PUK vote had not changed. By contrast, the website quoted the head of Turkoman Justice Party, Ammar Kahya, calling for a recount of all ballot boxes in Kirkuk as the partial recount had been unsuccessful. It added that Arab parties in Kirkuk have filed a complaint against the results at the UN office in the city, adding that 14 Arab and Turkoman parties are seeking permission to hold "protests and strikes" against the results of the recount of votes.

KR-I Elections to be held on time

Parliamentary elections will be held in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region on September 30. The Independent High Elections and Referendum Commission (IHERC) announced on Saturday, August 11, that the official campaign period will start on September 5 and end at 08:00 (local time) on September 28. Voting on September 30 will begin at 08:00 and end at 18:00, with preliminary results expected to be released within 72 hours of the polls closing.

Iraq's Abadi takes step back over Iran sanctions

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has taken a step back over Baghdad's compliance with the renewed US sanctions on Iran, saying that it had simply committed to not trading in US dollars. "I did not say we will abide by the sanctions ... but that we will abide by not transferring transactions in dollars to [Iran's] central bank, because I can't," Abadi said in his weekly press conference aired on the state-owned Iraqia News channel on August 13. He further noted that Baghdad remained undecided about whether imports from state-owned companies in Iran would be suspended. "We oppose sanctions that harm people, and it is not right for a big, strong nation to impose sanctions on other countries," he said. The premier claimed he had been misquoted in his statements last week, in which he said Iraq opposed the sanctions on Iran but would nonetheless abide by them. His latest statements come after his visit to Iran was reportedly cancelled as tensions flared up between the two neighbouring countries over Iraq's reported compliance with the sanctions. Several pro-Iran Shia factions attacked Abadi over his position on the sanctions, with many calling on him to backtrack on his statements.

Security**20,000 – 30,000 IS Fighters Remain in Iraq and Syria**

The United Nations released a report on Monday estimating that there are between 20,000 - 30,000 Da'esh fighters remain in Iraq and Syria despite the extremist group's defeat and a halt in the flow of foreigners joining its ranks. The report by UN sanctions monitors estimate that the total Da'esh membership in Iraq and Syria was "between 20,000 and 30,000 individuals, roughly equally distributed between the two countries." "Among these is still a significant component of the many thousands of active foreign terrorist fighters," said the report. The sanctions monitoring team submits independent reports every six months to the Security Council on the Da'esh group and Al Qaeda, which are on the UN terrorist blacklist. Da'esh once controlled large swathes of territory in Iraq and Syria, but last year it was driven out of Mosul and Raqa, the twin seats of power of the militant group. By January 2018, Da'esh was confined to small pockets of territory in Syria, although the report said the group "showed greater resilience" in eastern Syria. Da'esh "is still able to mount attacks inside Syrian territory. It does not fully control any territory in Iraq, but it remains active through sleeper cells" of agents hiding out in the desert and elsewhere, said the report. Some member-states raised concerns about new Da'esh cells emerging from the densely populated Rukban camp for internally displaced persons in southern Syria, on the border with Jordan, where families of Da'esh militants are now living. The flow of foreigners leaving Da'esh "remains lower than expected" and no other arena has emerged as a favourite destination for foreign fighters, although "significant numbers have made their way to Afghanistan", said the report. There are an estimated 3,500 to 4,500 Da'esh fighters in Afghanistan and those numbers are increasing, according to the report. There are also an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 Da'esh militants based in Libya, although some of the key operatives in the extremist group are being relocated to Afghanistan.

PKK Iran wings urge Kurdish parties to form joint army

The Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK) and the Free Democratic Society of Eastern Kurdistan (KODAR) have urged all Kurdish opposition parties in Iran to form a "joint national military force" and a military council, press reported on August 12. Both PJAK and KODAR are affiliated with the Turkish Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The website published a 10-point statement calling on the other Kurdish parties in Iran to form a joint commission to resolve disputes among the Kurdish parties. It said the goal of the joint action was to build a "free and democratic Kurdistan". The second point asked to form a supreme "national, democratic, and inclusive council" that would transcend the political parties and include representatives of partisan, non-partisan, and civil society organisations. It said that this council should monitor the actions of all parties, adding that a "joint national military force" should be formed within the framework of protecting "legitimate rights". Another point called for the formation of joint "media and television" channels to publish news about the "national council" in Kurdistan and Iran. It also called for the establishment of a "Kurdish strategic research centre in Europe with the participation of Kurdish diaspora and local researchers for consultation purposes". The Kurdish groups called for the establishment of special inclusive organisations for women based on strategies to solve the issues of women in the Kurdish community in Iran. There are several Kurdish political parties in Iran. The most active among them currently is the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KDPI or PDKI), which is close to the KDP in Iraq led by Massoud Barzani. In 2015, the KDPI resumed its armed struggle against Tehran and has frequently clashed with Iranian forces near its bases on the Iraqi Kurdistan-Iranian border. The new call comes as five Iranian Kurdish parties, including KDPI, jointly rejected a call by KODAR to not start armed action against the Iranian government, press reported on August 08. The other four groups rejecting the call were the Democratic Party of Kurdistan (DPK), Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan, Komala of Kurdistan, and the Organisation of Iranian Kurdistan Struggle, Bas News said. Earlier on the same day, KODAR Co-Chair Fuad Beritan had said his party rejects both the current position of the Iranian authorities and US intervention.

Iraqi Kurdish minister warns of IS threat

Acting Peshmerga Minister of Iraq's Kurdistan Region Kareem Sinjari has said that the Peshmerga forces should be prepared as Islamic State is reorganizing in "a new form". The comments by Sinjari, who is also the interior minister, were made at a graduation ceremony for Zeravani Peshmerga, according to press. Sinjari said "a

robust plan" has been put in place to enhance the Peshmerga's capacity and that support is needed from all sides and the coalition countries. "Expelling IS does not mean its radical ideology has been eradicated, rather IS is now reorganising itself in a new form and it has become a threat to the security of the liberated areas," he said, warning that "we should be prepared for any undesirable circumstances". Sinjari added that for the Peshmerga to be prepared for any confrontation, they need "enduring support from coalition forces in terms of providing training, weapons and consultation".

Economy

Iraqi court postpones ruling on Kurdish oil sales

The Iraqi Supreme Federal Court has for the fifth time postponed on August 14 a ruling on a case filed against the Kurdistan Region for independent oil sales, deemed "unconstitutional". The case, which was filed by the Iraqi Oil Ministry against the Kurdistan Region's Natural Resources Ministry (MNR), was postponed until 29 August, according to Kurdistan Democratic Party-affiliated Rudaw website. Kurdistan Region's Cabinet Secretary Amanj Rahim told Rudaw that representatives from the Iraqi and Kurdistan governments, the MNR and the Oil Ministry were present at the fifth session, during which "it was decided to appoint an expert to prepare a report about the matter by August 29". Neither the report nor the court website have named the representative. The court was supposed to make a final decision about the case today, but "determining the matter has been postponed to August 29", he added. The case is regarding independent oil sales by the Kurdistan Region since 2014, which the federal authorities see as unconstitutional.

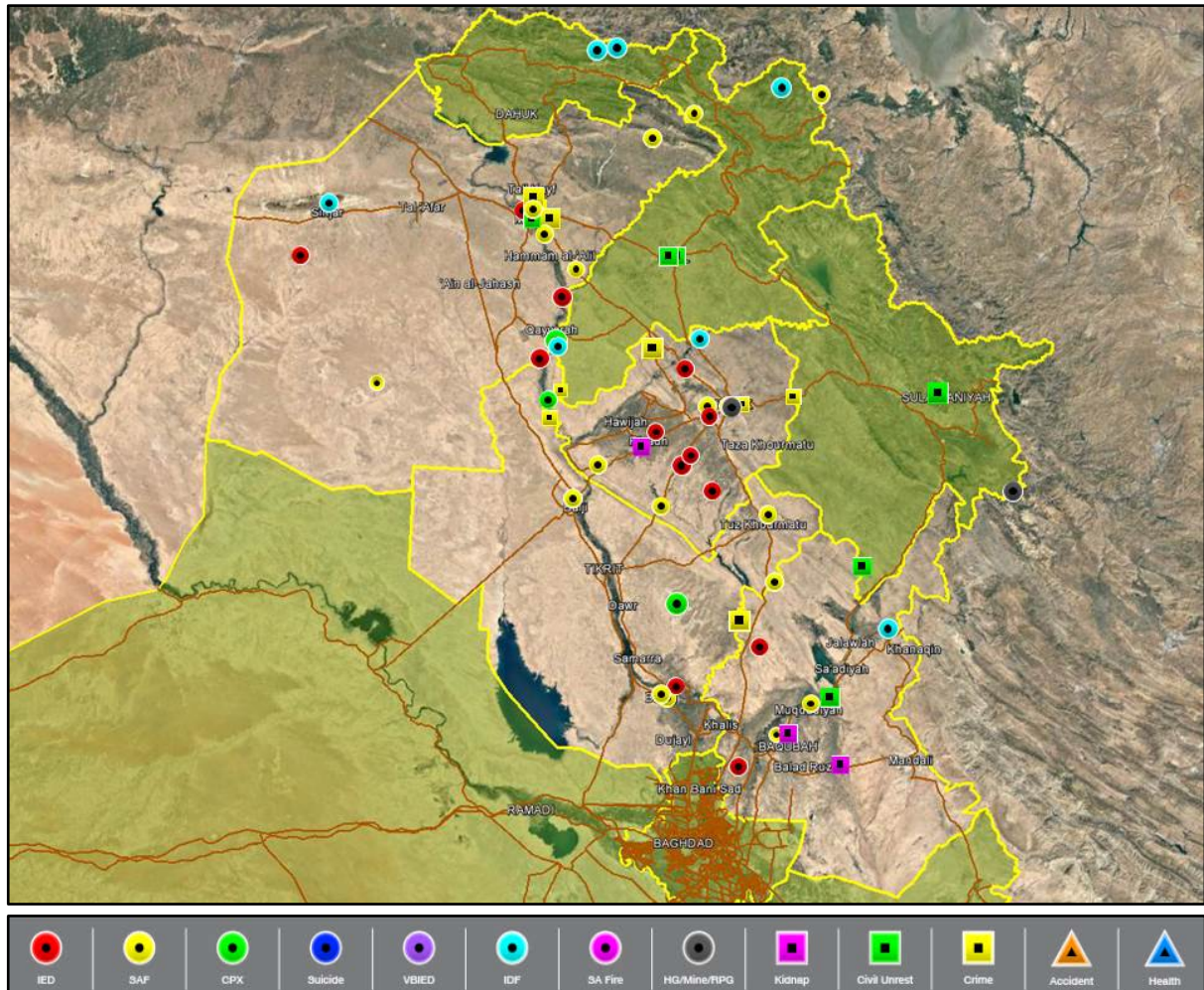
Iraq's PM discusses water shortage in Turkey

Iraq's Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi and other government officials have left for Ankara to discuss with Turkish officials economic relations and concerns over the supply of water and electricity. "During the visit, we will discuss ways of boosting cooperation between the two countries and discussing a number of issues related to water, electricity, health, industry, investments, security, culture and other topics of common interest," Abadi said in a Facebook post on August 14. Turkey's decision to fill up the reservoir of Ilisu Dam caused a significant decrease in the Tigris River's water levels, which aggravated an acute water crisis that began affecting Iraq in June. The water crisis, in addition to a high unemployment rate and electricity shortages, prompted angry protests in Iraq's southern provinces that reportedly left 14 people dead. Abadi was also scheduled to visit Iran after concluding discussions with Turkish officials in Ankara, but the trip was cancelled amid a dispute over Iraq's decision to support US sanctions against Iran.

WEEKLY OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT

Countrywide Military/Security Situation

Northern Provinces



In the Kurdish region, this week has seen continued Turkish airstrikes against PKK positions which coincided with reports that civilians supporting the terrorist group were planning celebrations in the Qandil Mountains to mark the anniversary of when the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) staged their first attack in Turkey on 15 August 1984. The usual areas in the Hakurk region of Erbil province were the focus of Turkish airstrikes, although it was reported that six Turkish soldiers were wounded on August 09 by several mortar shells launched by PKK militants from inside the Iraqi territories in Dohuk province. Demonstration activity has also been noted this week with medical graduates demonstrating in front of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Council of Ministers Building in Erbil city, demanding jobs. In addition, a number of dentistry, medical and nursing graduates in Sulaymaniyah held a protest on August 13 against the high rate of unemployment in the Kurdistan Region. The protesters reportedly gathered outside the building of Sulaymaniyah Governorate demanding employment as promised by the Minister of Health, Rekawt Hama Rasheed.

In Nineveh province over the reporting period, activity has been a typical mix of successful ISF arrests and cache finds but also sporadic attacks by IS cells in the suburbs of Mosul and the surrounding countryside. A dual-improvised explosive device (IED) attack killed at least two people and wounded ten others in Sanjej, Qayyarah sub-district (southeast of Mosul) and on the night of August 13, pro-government Sunni tribal militias repulsed an

IS attack in the village of Kanus, also near Qayyarah. Additionally, ISF reportedly killed two IS militants including a suicide attacker and arrested a third in a failed infiltration attempt into Nimrud. In addition, two policemen were killed and three others wounded in an IED strike against a security patrol in the al-Rashidiyah sub-district, north of Mosul.

Further to last week's reporting (See GardaWorld Iraq Weekly Report dated August 11) a security source has told press that the Commando Battalion of 15th IA infantry division arrived in Sinjar on August 12 to occupy sites that were abandoned by the PMF recently. It was previously reported that the PMF had begun withdrawing from some areas in the northern province of Nineveh, which had created concern among the civilian population about a possible security vacuum. Kurdistan 24 news site reportedly obtained a copy of an order which directed PMF units to leave certain areas of operation in Nineveh, stating that the "stability and security situation" now no longer warrants their presence. According to the report it was decided to remove PMF operations command centres in western Nineveh, eastern Nineveh, and Baiji. It was further reported that the PMF would be moving from its positions on the border areas of Nineveh province with Syria - the strategic points to be taken over the Iraqi army's Nineveh Operations Command. The document also mentioned that the PMF had decided to remove its 14th brigade from Nineveh entirely. A senior figure of the Sunni tribal militia stated that a force of the 8th Bde, 7th IA infantry division had been sent from the al-Baghdadi sub-district in Anbar province to the Tal Safuk region, 40 km south of Sinjar in Nineveh province, to enhance security at the Syrian border. However, the PMF later this week rejected rumours of a full scale PMF withdrawal from Nineveh, stating that "what was circulated by media outlets over an agreement between Baghdad and Erbil on the return of Peshmerga and withdrawal of PMFs from the disputed regions is untrue".

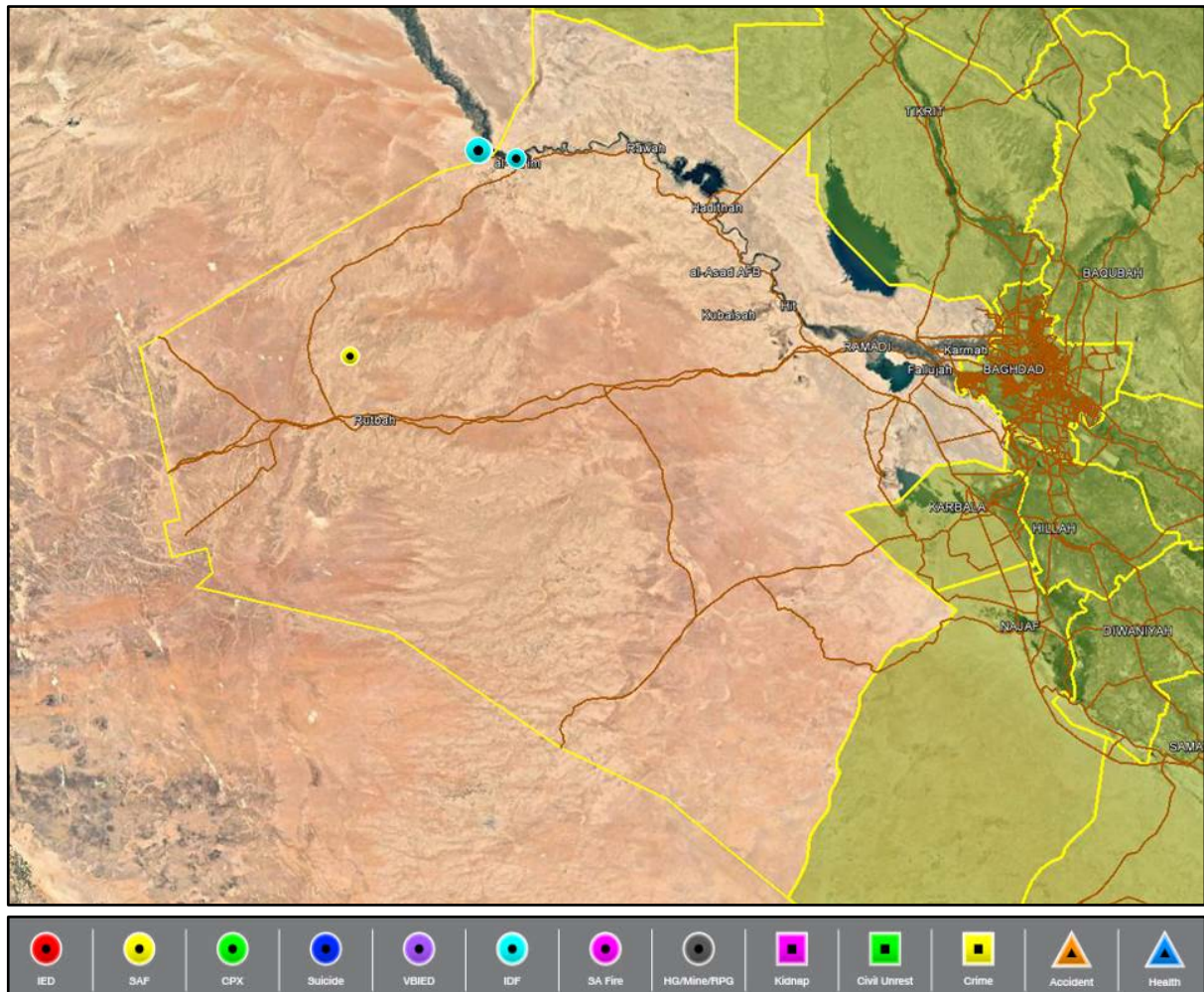
Turkish war planes also struck YBS-held areas of Sinjar, killing local PKK head Zaki Shingali according to press reports. Zaki Shingali was reportedly the leader of all PKK forces in Sinjar. In addition, four YBS fighters were killed and Haval Mazlum, the general commander of the YBS was also wounded. The Turkish military confirmed that the joint operation between it and Turkey's national intelligence agencies was carried out on August 15. Later this week, the Iraqi Foreign Ministry condemned the attack and denied that there was any pre-coordination between the Iraqi and Turkish forces. Earlier, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi had stressed that his government opposed any military attacks launched from Iraqi territory against Turkey, in reference to attacks carried out by Kurdish militants from the Kurdish-controlled areas of Iraq. He added that Iraqi and Turkish officials were preparing a border control plan to prevent any potential attacks against Turkey.

In Kirkuk province, IS activity has been constant, with harassing SAF and IED attacks targeting predominantly ISF units this week. The focus of activity in the province has been Hawijah where IS have also carried out a number of kidnaps of civilians this week. In unusual reporting, the security forces reported that they had killed two 'terrorists' in the mountains of Makhoul, with the spokesman of the Centre for Security Information Brigadier Yahya Rasool saying that the detachments of the Federal Police Intelligence in Kirkuk had killed the two terrorists who were wearing Afghan uniforms.(NFDK). In Kirkuk city itself, on the night of August 10, several unidentified gunmen reportedly exchanged gunfire with the security guards at the private residence of a member of the National Iraqi Alliance named as Nabil Mezher Kawther near the celebrations yard in Kirkuk city and a sound bomb reportedly exploded near the headquarters of the Turkmen Front, north of Kirkuk. A civilian (Sunni) was also killed when a UVIED detonated beneath his vehicle whilst transiting al-Wasiti neighbourhood in southern Kirkuk city. Protest action was also witnessed in the city with dozens of Mhuktars gathering outside the provincial council building in Kirkuk city, protesting the delay of their monthly wages.

In Salah-al-Din province, five people were killed in the early morning of August 11 by unknown gunmen who broke into a house at a village near the oil refinery town of Baiji, some 200 km north of Iraqi capital Baghdad, and shot dead two brothers and dragged three of their young nephews outside the house and shot them dead. No group has so far claimed responsibility for the attacks, but IS, in most cases, is responsible for such attacks against civilians. Those killed in the attack on the village of were reportedly members of a tribal militia affiliated with the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF). The militants fled the area after the attack. On August 12,

a major five-pronged IS attack was repulsed by IA units in the al-Aitha region, east of al-Dour town. The incident left five army personnel killed and others wounded, with 14 Islamic State members, some wearing suicide belts, killed. Finally, troops from the Commando Battalion attached to the Samarra Operations Command shot and killed two IS suicide attackers and arrested a third after besieging them in the Sefouna area of al-Mutassim sub-district in eastern Samarra. Two members of the Sadrist Shia militia, the Peace Brigades were killed and two others wounded in an IED explosion the in Is'haq region, also near Samarra. Meanwhile, at about 2145hrs on August 10, a high voltage electricity transmission pylon was reported to have been subjected to a SAF attack near the village of Enjanah in al-Adhaim sub-district, causing power outages in Kirkuk, Nineveh and SaD provinces.

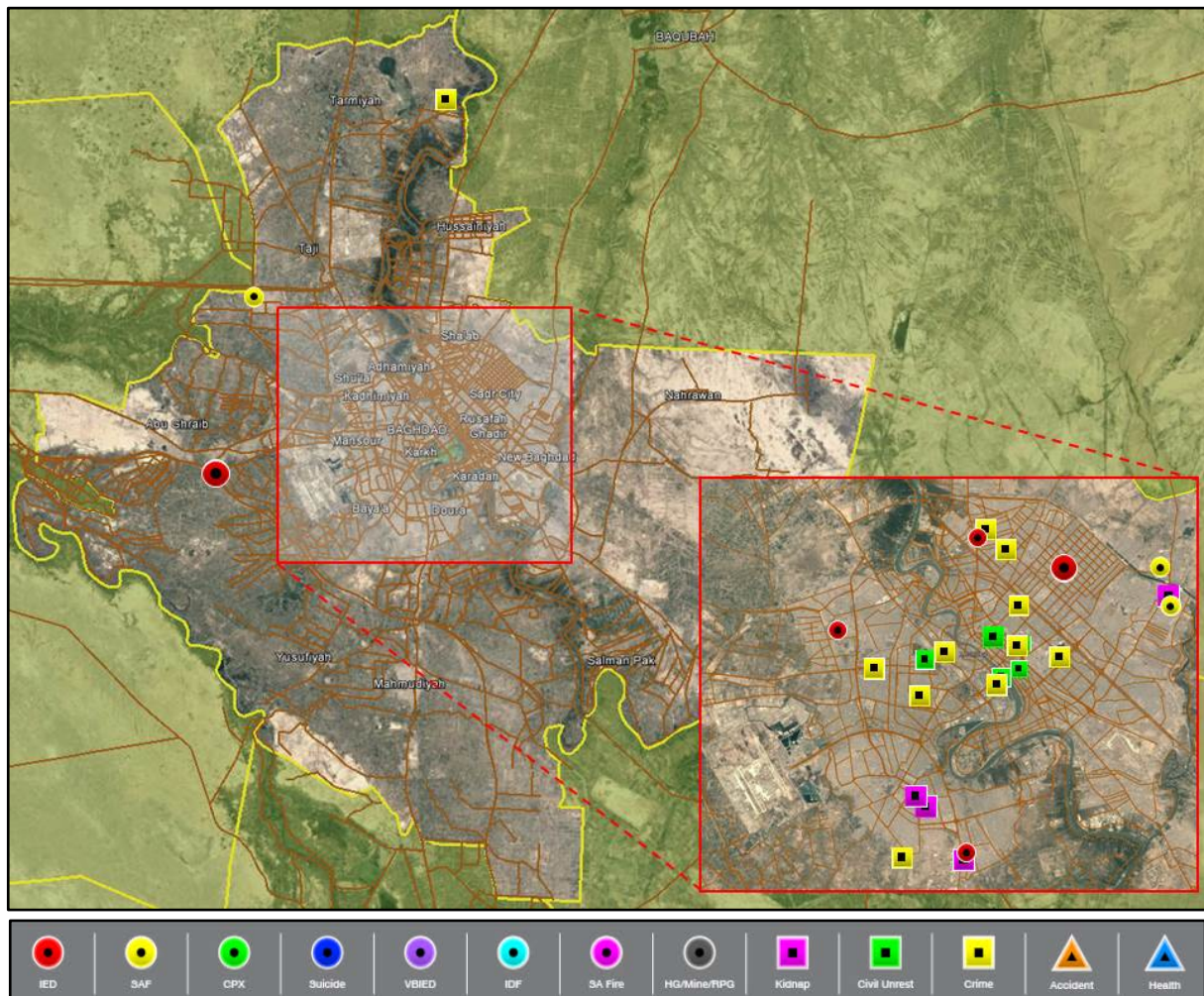
Finally, in Diyala province, Diyala Police Command announced the dismantling of what is known as the "cub machine" of Islamic State in Diyala. Spokesman of the Diyala Police Command Colonel Ghalib Attia told press that specialized security teams were able to "overthrow the leaders of the cub machine of Daesh", which emerged after the events of 2014 to recruit young suicide bombers aimed at targeting security forces. Finally, two PMF members were injured in an IED explosion north-east of Baquba on the evening of August 16. The IED had been placed on the side of one of the main roads leading to the Sansal basin north of Muqdadiyah.

Anbar Province

The Ministry of Defence announced that acting on accurate intelligence reports, an IED-laden motorcycle placed in an alley near a local restaurant in Fallujah was dismantled without incident, and an IS sleeper cell composed of six militants was arrested in several raids in Zankuro, Albu Tiban and Qarya al-Asriya areas of Ramadi district

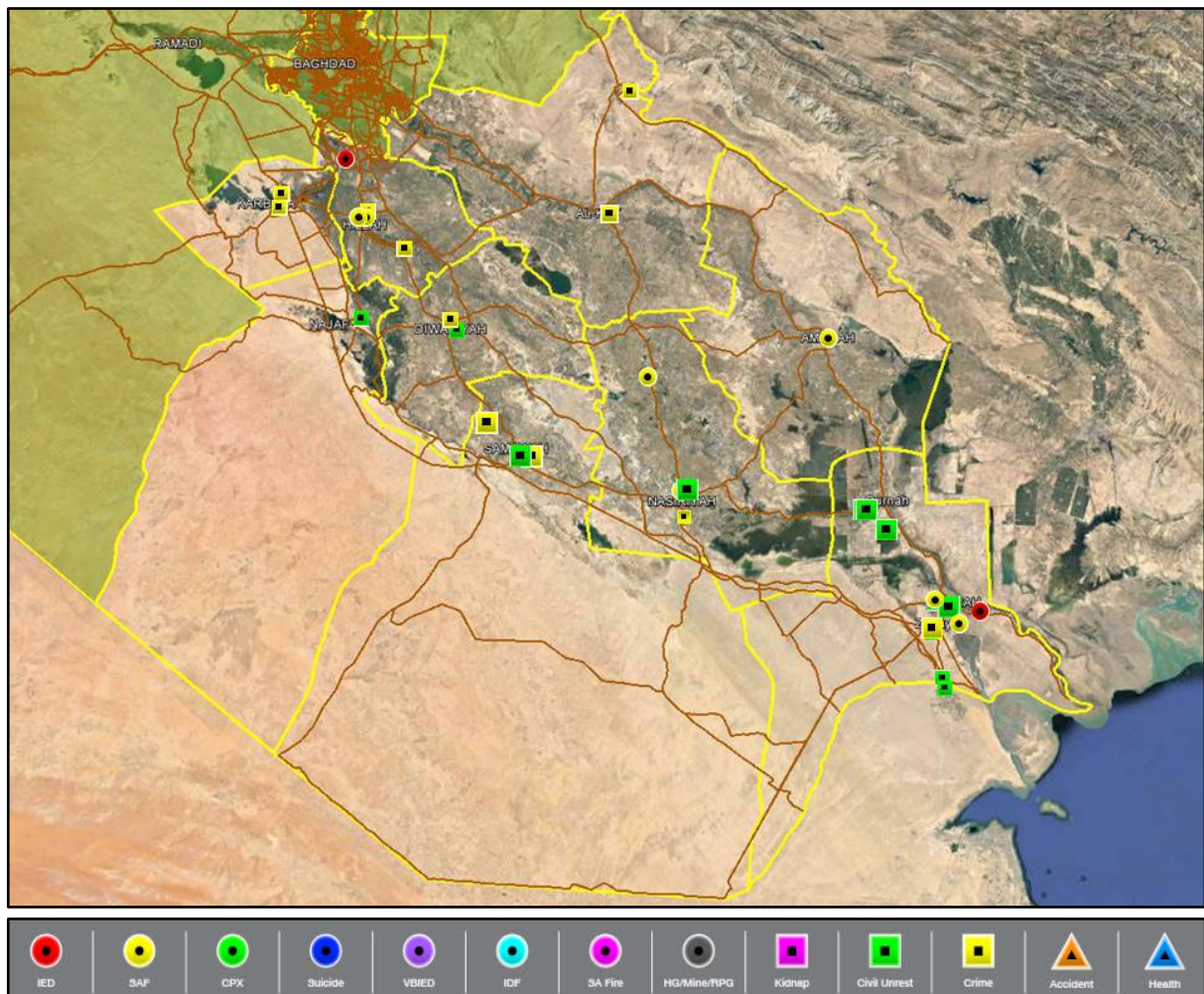
Also this week, in single source, uncorroborated press reporting, the so-called leader of Islamic State, Abu Bakir al-Baghdadi, was reported to have recently been targeted in an airstrike carried out by the Iraqi aircraft 'in the border areas between Iraq and Syria'. The report reiterated that Baghdadi has been reported killed or injured several times previously, but his exact condition and whereabouts remain unknown. The report quoted an unnamed Iraqi security source saying that al-Baghdadi had been severely injured in this latest attack which allegedly took place during a meeting between al-Baghdadi and other IS leaders on the Iraq-Syria border. The source also claimed that several high-ranking IS members were killed during the attack. The exact date of the alleged airstrikes remains unknown.

Finally, Iraqi jets struck a gathering of IS fighters in neighbouring Syria on August 16 according to a statement by the ISF. F-16 fighter jets bombed and destroyed an "operations room", leaving several terrorists dead. "According to intelligence, those terrorists who were killed were planning criminal operations using suicide vests and intended to target innocents in the next few days inside Iraq," the military said in a statement.

Capital Region (Including Baghdad City)

A slight uptick in low-yield IED attacks were noted within the city this week. Three people were killed and four others, were injured when an explosive device detonated on August 14 in a popular market in Sadr city. The device detonated under a vegetable vendor's stand, injuring at least three female shoppers. The market, called Souq Moridi, is in a busy section of the sprawling and overcrowded Thawra District popularly known as Sadr City. The area is a stronghold of forces loyal to Muqtada al Sadr, the head of the political coalition that won the most votes in Iraq's May election, and is named after his father. In addition, four people were reported to have been wounded when a low-yield IED exploded near a gathering of civilians in Hay al-Jaza'ir in Shaab, Adhamiyah District and another explosive device placed inside a Kia mini bus detonated in the Shula area also in Adhamiyah district, injuring two civilians.

In Baghdad province, two persons were severely wounded when an IED planted under a vehicle in the Shaula area northwest of Baghdad detonated. An IA soldier was also wounded in an IED strike in Mahmudiyyah south of Baghdad and two civilians were injured in an IED detonation which occurred near a football ground in the Abu Dusheir region. Abu Ghraib has also featured in this week's reporting with an IED in another football ground in the district targeted by an IED which resulted in the wounding of four people.

Southern Provinces

In Karbala, the security committee in Karbala announced the preparation of a special security plan for the day of Arafa and Eid al-Adha, expected to be attended by more than four million visitors from inside and outside Iraq between 21 and 26 August. A statement issued said the Ministries of Defence and Interior and the rest of the security services and PMF will provide teams for the protection of the two holy sites in Karbala.

In Dhi Qar province, several armed men shot and killed an elder from the Al-Ibrahim tribe, Rashed Jawad Bahloul, in Sayed Dakhil district, along with one of his cousins - the incident is thought to be related to an outstanding tribal dispute. ISF subsequently implemented heightened security measures in the region in anticipation of a major tribal conflict after the killing of the sheikh. Protest action has also been evident in the province this week with dozens of graduates of the colleges of veterinary medicine gathering outside the provincial council building in Nasiriyah, demanding jobs, and who were later joined by higher education graduates also demanding the same. Najaf also saw demonstrations during the reporting period with hundreds of civilians protesting in Thawrat al-Eshreen square in central Najaf, demanding the prosecution of corrupt politicians and better local services provision.

In Maysan province, the local council officially labelled the current drought afflicting the province as “an environmental catastrophe”. According to Jassem al-Hajjaj, Maysan Province's First Deputy, the water scarcity and drought have completely devastated the province. Much of southern Iraq has witnessed drought and water scarcity crisis, especially as a result of the soaring summer temperatures (that reach over 50 degrees Celsius), as well as the water issues created by Turkey's and Iran's dam activities in their respective countries

Meanwhile, daily protest action in Basra province continued this week, but the numbers attending have dramatically reduced, with action more pronounced at the Basra Governate and the Safwan Border Crossing (BXP). Activity at and around the oil fields and oil related infrastructure have all but ceased with only limited action now being witnessed. This was evident once again near the Cluster Pump 11 site around WQ 2 on August 14 when protesters arrived at the site claiming their demands had not been met. ISF/OPF fired multiple warning shots into the air to disperse the gathering, resulting in two protesters and two security force personnel injured. The following day protesters arrived in Huwair to conduct a peaceful action to have those arrested at WQ 2 released – information was received that an individual who had been arrested the previous day had died (claims of torture); this was the catalyst for violent action. There is currently a tense calm in the area, but protests denouncing the ISF action have been conducted. The overall situation in Basra – excluding demonstrator action - remains unchanged with only limited criminal, intimidatory and tribal activity recorded this week. After a period of respite an increase in the number of reported tribal related incidents was also seen. The first, an armed exchange between two clans of the same tribe during the early hours of August 14 in the Hayyanayah area of the city and the find of two male bodies – exhibiting gunshot wounds – were found in different locations. One near the al-Fayhaa hospital and the other near the al-Hawamad River by the Shatt al-Arab, both the deaths believed to have been tribal assassinations. On August 16 a sound-bomb device detonated outside the home of the Director of the Basra Passport office in the Shatt al-Arab district in eastern Basra - no casualties were recorded, with the device intended to intimidate rather than harm.

In relation to the provision of basic services – on August 13, the Ministry of Water Resources announced that Basra was to receive a desalination plant – four of these have been donated by Kuwait and much like the 17 electricity generators donated in late July are at the Safwan BXP awaiting distribution. Each of the plants has the capacity to produce 10,000 cu m of drinking water per day and whilst the plant will not eliminate the provinces issues in regard the salinity of all the water, it should go some way to alleviating the angst felt by some Basrawis.

ACRONYM LIST

All - Area of Intelligence Interest	MoO - Ministry of Oil
AKA - Also Known As	MoT - Ministry of Transportation
AO - Area of Operations	MSR - Main Supply Route
APC - Armored Personnel Carrier	NFDK - No Further Details Known
APIED - Anti-Personnel IED	NGO - Non-Governmental Organization (aid/charity)
AQ - Al-Qaeda	NSTR - Nothing Significant To Report
AT - Anti-Tank	OCG - Organized Crime Group
ATGW - Anti Tank Guided Weapon	OPF - Oil Protection Force
AVIED - Anti-Vehicle IED	PAX - Person, Persons or Passenger
BBIED - Body Borne IED	PBIED - Person-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (UN Term)
Bde - Brigade	PMF – Popular Mobilisation Forces
Bn - Battalion	Pol - Point of Impact (for IDF)
BXP - Border Crossing Point	PoO - Point of Origin (for IDF)
CET - Convoy Escort Team	PSAF - Precision Small Arms Fire
CLC - Concerned Local Citizens	PSC - Private Security Company
CoP - Chief of Police	PSD - Private Security Detail
CP - Check Point	RCIED - Remote-Controlled IED
C-PERS - Captured Personnel	RPG - Rocket Propelled Grenade
CPX - Complex Attack (attack using multiple weapon systems)	RTA - Road Traffic Accident
CQA - Close Quarter Assassination/Attack	SAF - Small Arms Fire
DBS - Drive by Shooting	SAFIRE - Surface to Air FIRE
Div - Division	SF - Special Forces
DoD - Department of Defense	SVBIED - Suicide Vehicle Borne IED
DoS - Department of State	SVEST - Suicide Explosive Worn Vest
DoS - US Department of State	TCN - Third Country National
ECP - Entry Control Point	TCP - Traffic Control Point
EFP - Explosively Formed Projectile	Technical - An improvised weapon-mounted pick-up truck
EOD - Explosive Ordnance Disposal (Bomb Squad)	TTP - Tactics, Techniques and Practices
ERW - Explosive Remnants of War	UVIED - Under Vehicle IED
FoM - Freedom of Movement	UXO - Unexploded Ordnance
Gol - Government of Iraq	VBIED - Vehicle Borne IED
HCN - Host Country National	VCP - Vehicle Checkpoint
HG - Hand Grenade	WIA - Wounded in Action
HME - Home Made Explosive	
HMG - Heavy Machine Gun	
HVT - High Value Target	
IC - International Community	
IDF - Indirect Fire (i.e.: rockets, mortars)	
IDP - Internally Displaced Persons	
IEC - Independent Electoral Commission	
IED - Improvised Explosive Device	
IM - International Military	
IOC - International Oil Company	
IRAM - Improvised Rocket Assisted Mortar	
IRL - Improvised Rocket Launcher	
IS - Islamic State	
IVCP - Illegal Vehicle Check Point	
IVO - In Vicinity Of	
IZ - International Zone	
KIA - Killed in Action	
LN - Local National/Iraqi Civilian	
MAIED - Magnetically attached IED (aka UVIED)	
MIA - Missing in Action	
MoD - Ministry of Defense	
MoF - Ministry of Finance	
MoFA - Ministry of Foreign Affairs	
MoHE - Ministry of Higher Education	
Mol - Ministry of Interior	
MoJ - Ministry of Justice	

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Middle East

International Protective Services Headquarters
Office 2502, Tower 2, Currency House
DIFC, PO Box 482069
Dubai, United Arab Emirates

United States

1101 Wilson Boulevard
Suite 1725
Arlington, VA, 22209
United States

UK

5th Floor
1, London Bridge
London
SE1 9BG

Europe

37-39 rue des Deux Eglises
1000 Brussels
Belgium

garda.com